Claims 5-7 (canceled)

8. (previously amended) A nucleic acid vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 4 .

9. (original) A host cell containing the vector of claim 8.

Claims 10-23 (canceled)

24. (previously presented) A process for producing a polypeptide comprising culturing the host cell of claim 9 under conditions sufficient for the production of said polypeptide, and recovering the peptide from the host cell culture.

25. (previously presented) An isolated polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:1.

26. (previously presented). An isolated polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

27. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 8, wherein said vector is selected from the group consisting of a plasmid, virus, and bacteriophage.

28. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 8, wherein said isolated nucleic acid molecule is inserted into said vector in proper orientation and correct reading frame such that the protein of SEQ ID NO: 2 may be expressed by a cell transformed with said vector.

29. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 28, wherein said isolated nucleic acid molecule is operatively linked to a promoter sequence.

30 (currently amended). An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a human metalloprotease peptide, said nucleic acid molecule sharing at least 95% percent homology with a nucleic acid molecule shown in SEQ ID NOS:1 or 3.

31 (currently amended). An isolated nucleic acid molecule ~~according to claim 4 that~~ shares at least 90 percent homology with a nucleic acid molecule shown in SEQ ID NOS:1 or 3 encoding metalloprotease.

32 (previously presented) . A nucleic acid vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of claim 31.

33 (previously presented). A host cell containing the vector of claim 32.

34. (previously presented) A process for producing a polypeptide comprising culturing the host cell of claim 33 under conditions sufficient for the production of said polypeptide, and recovering the peptide from the host cell culture.

35. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 32, wherein said vector is selected from the group consisting of a plasmid, virus, and bacteriophage.

36. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 32, wherein said isolated nucleic acid molecule is inserted into said vector in proper orientation and correct reading frame such that the protein of SEQ ID NO: 2 may be expressed by a cell transformed with said vector.

37. (previously presented). A vector according to claim 36, wherein said isolated nucleic acid molecule is operatively linked to a promoter sequence.